

STAT

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 36NEWSWEEK
16 NOVEMBER 1981

A Hot New Cold War at ICA

It was founded at the height of the cold war in 1953 with one principal mission: to trumpet America's virtues and the Soviet Union's faults. Since then, the U.S. International Communication Agency has weathered ideological flip-flops, budget cuts, name changes and charges that it was either soft on communism or a capitalist propaganda tool. Now Ronald Reagan is rearming the nation's public-relations agency for a bold new war of words with the Soviets. He plans to restore the agency's original name, the U.S. Information Agency, and he has appointed a zealous kitchen-cabinet crony, Charles Z. Wick, as its director. But Wick's innovations have drawn sharp criticism from veteran U.S. information officers. "The attitude of everyone in the agen-

declassify and disseminate unflattering facts about Soviet activities. Wick pushed for and helped publicize the Pentagon's slick booklet on the Soviet arms buildup last September, and he circulated State Department charges that the Soviets had engaged in chemical warfare, causing "yellow rain," in Southeast Asia. "There's a treasure trove of factual material out there," says ICA program director John Hughes.

A genial Californian who made millions in real estate, nursing homes and entertainment (he wrote and produced the film "Snow White and the Three Stooges") and who organized Reagan's glittering Inauguration celebration, Wick, 64, shares both Reagan's world view and his penchant for volunteerism. Faced with a mandated 12

percent cut in the ICA's \$561 million budget this year, Wick has proposed sharp reductions in its cultural and exchange programs, and set up 22 volunteer committees. Prominent neoconservative Norman Podhoretz, for example, is organizing a group of intellectuals to suggest long-range ICA goals. Jack Valenti, who represents movie companies, is recruiting film stars to take the message of America abroad, and Arnaud de Borchgrave, a former NEWSWEEK correspondent and co-author of "The Spike," a novel about Soviet disinformation, is advising Wick on disinformation plays.

'Mickey Mouse': Many career ICA officials say Wick is out of touch with modern foreign-policy complexities—or simply naive. "The Soviets tell lies! How about that!" laughs one ICA officer posted in the

Far East. Some staffers have nicknamed the new director "Air-Wick," and graffiti in an ICA men's room in Washington reads, "Mickey Mouse wears a Charlie Wick wrist watch." ICA veterans say that the Soviets are becoming more skillful at propaganda, but most think that Wick has exaggerated the Russian influence. "Here we are dealing with a free and sophisticated press," says one ICA officer stationed in Western Europe. "If you tried to tell people that the anti-nuclear movement was run by the Russians, they'd think you were drunk or stupid or both." In general, veteran ICA staffers believe that Wick and Reagan, as one puts it, "have come in with some undiluted campaign notions of selling America's message to the world, and little knowledge of the market they're trying to sell to."

Opposition to Wick is strongest at the Voice of America, the ICA's worldwide

has called them in the past. Some VOA staffers suspect that Wick also aims to purge the radio network of many veteran officials. Last week deputy director and longtime staffer M. William Haratunian was removed. Wick denies that a purge is beginning, but close associates say he suspects not only that some VOA staffers are "communist dupes," but that the VOA itself "may have been penetrated."

'At War': While hardly going that far, many outsiders agree that the VOA has been too zealous in efforts to be objective—giving air time to Soviet officials challenging U.S. weapons policies, for example. As a close friend of Reagan, Wick will have more influence in the White House than any ICA director since Edward R. Murrow ran the agency for John F. Kennedy. Still, foreign specialists wonder if Wick's cold-warrior concept won't hamper his effectiveness. Wick recently startled a private foreign-policy group in Washington by announcing, "We are at war [with the Soviets], whether de facto or declared." Said one member of the audience, Patricia Kutzner, executive director of the World Hunger Education Service, "It is as if he had entered a time capsule in the 1950s and just emerged."

MELINDA BECK with JANE WHITMORE
in Washington and bureau reports



James D. Wilson—Newsweek

Wick (left) with staffer: Out of touch—or just naïve?

cy is, "Here we go again," says one ex-ICA official. "It's back to Truman and America First and all the cold-war rhetoric."

At the heart of the ICA's new message is Project Truth, a campaign to identify and discredit Soviet "disinformation"—lies and rumors propagated by Moscow to damage America's image in the world. Wick is working with the CIA and State and Defense departments to declassify evidence of such Soviet tactics. Last month, for example, the State Department released a four-page statement alleging that Moscow was responsible for reports of U.S. involvement in the plane crash that killed Panamanian Gen. Omar Torrijos Herrera last August and in the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979. The ICA has also begun distributing a monthly Soviet Disinformation Alert to all U.S. embassies and is compiling evidence of Soviet ties to the anti-nuclear movement in Western Europe.

Another aim Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2010/06/23 : CIA-RDP90-00806R000201170004-6